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SELECTED TRANSLATIONS ON RELIGION IN THE USSR

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FOREWORD

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SELECTED TRANSLATIONS ON RELIGION IN THE USSR

[This report contains the translations of items selected from the newspapers Sovetskaya Kirgiziya and Sovetskaya Latviya. Bibliographic information accompanies each item.]

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WITHOUT A CLOAK OF PIETY

-USSR-

Following is the translation of an article by a student in the Academy of Arts imeni Repin, A. Tarchokov, in Sovetskaya Kirgiziya (Soviet Kirghizia), 7 March 1961, page 3./

At the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism

In the center of Leningrad on the Nevskiy Prospekt there stands a magnificent building with numerous columns--one of the remarkable creations of Russian architecture. It was built at the imperial command of Paul I under the direction of the remarkable Russian architect Andrey Nikiforovich Voronikhin. About five thousand serfs worked on the construction of this edifice, which was to be called the Kazan' Cathedral. The month of January, 1961, marked the 150th anniversary of its completion.

During the War of the Fatherland of 1812, the Cathedral served as a memorial of military glory. It was a repository of captured enemy flags, as well as keys to cities liberated by the Russian troops from the Napoleonic invaders. Then, the Cathedral became the church attended by the Czar's family and the nobility.

In 1929, the Kazan' Cathedral was turned over to the USSR Academy of Sciences to be converted into the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism.

The Museum now contains over one hundred thousand items on exhibition. It presently includes the following departments: "Natural Science and Religion", "Religion in Ancient Egypt", "Religion and Atheism in Ancient Greece", "The Origin of Christianity", "The History of the Papacy and Inquisition". It is visited by up to 300,000 persons annually.

The special attention of the visitors is attracted by the history of the papacy and the Inquisition. Aleksey Maksomovich Gor'kiy used to say that the Inquisition was the

most vile thing perpetrated by the Church in the process of educating the people to become venal creatures, traitors, liars, hypocrites, and sadists.

Here we see a model of a chamber such as those in which the inquisitors would interrogate and torture the freedom-loving people who had lost their faith in the church. The model is constructed according to the preserved descriptions and old engravings. Behind a table in the recesses of the chamber, overshadowed by a crucifix, sit the Dominican inquisitors. They are conducting an interrogation. Off to the side sits the inquisitorial secretary. Also present is the executioner awaiting his orders. Off to the left on a brazier lie the instruments of torture. The holy fathers would prove the rightness of their religion by means of hot pokers.

The exhibit entitled "The Inquisition in Our Time" tells of the still extant organization into which the Catholic priests still attempt to attract fanatics. They inform the inquisition of all violations of the "purity of faith and morals".

The section on the history of the papacy and the Inquisition includes numerous display items designed to expose the anti-popular activities of the Vatican, that "state within a state", which arose as early as the 8th Century. It is located in Rome, within a territory of 44 hectares, set aside for it along with rights of "independence and sovereignty". During World War II, the Vatican was on the side of the Fascist bandits, and issued calls to the believers to support by all possible means the organizers of the war; it even awarded medals to the most zealous butchers.

In 1945, during the trials of the Fascist criminals, the papal chancellery appealed for mercy on behalf of 200 butchers. The Vatican also asked for mercy for Hitler's Gauleiter Greiser, who was responsible for the deaths of a million Poles, including 2,000 priests tortured to death in the concentration camps.

A special exhibit seeks to expose the Catholic priests who participated in the counter-revolutionary revolt in Hungary. Here are photographs of one of the leaders of the counter-revolution, Cardinal Mindzenty, along with a copy of a congratulatory telegram sent to him during the days of the revolt by Pope Pius the XII.

Of great interest are the exhibits which show the origin of the papacy. The Roman popes once stood at the head of the Christian church in Western Europe. During the 4th and 5th Centuries, these men received the name of popes, and in order to justify their power, declared themselves to be the heirs of the Apostle Peter, who was supposed to have

been the first bishop of Rome. Later, false documents were prepared, which were designed to prove that the popes are the heirs of Christ and the Apostle Paul, and that their power was higher than that of kings and emperors.

A satirical medallion dating from the 16th Century inscribed "The Pope receiving the Figure of the Devil" and other medals widely distributed in a number of West European countries during the 16th and 17th Centuries clearly demonstrated the anti-clerical sentiments of the mass of the peoples of Europe. Even Cardinal Baronius did not deny that "The throne of St. Peter was occupied not by human beings, but by monsters in the guise of men. Arrogant, lustful, and wallowing in carnal sin, women ruled Rome and the papal throne along with their lovers and illegitimate offspring."

The falsity of religion stands out clearly in admissions made by the popes themselves. "Any religion is good, but the most foolish one is best of all", noted Pope Alexander IV. Pope Boniface VIII frankly stated: "The resurrection of the Saints will come just as that of my dead horse". Pope Innocent VIII asserted: "God does not wish the death of a sinner; God wants the sinner to live on and to pay his due".

The hatred of the masses for religion was reflected in the works of the progressive artists of the time. Widely distributed was the caricature entitled "The Papal Ass in Rome". The ass's head was intended to represent the pope himself; his right hand, resembling the foot of an elephant, stood for his ecclesiastical retinue; the hoof of a bull stood for his servants. Many people visited Rome especially to see the pope with the head of an ass. Another well-known caricature, "I am the Pope", pokes fun at Alexander IV, who gained a melancholy fame by his innumerable crimes and foul deeds.

In the section devoted to "Religion and Atheism in the Countries of the East", there are included a Buddhist-Lamaist pantheon, collections on Islam, the Japanese Shinto religion, and Chinese Confucianism and Taoism, all of which are widespread in their various forms in India, Tibet, China, Japan, Mongolia, Thailand, Burma, and other countries.

The exhibits and documents in the section entitled "The History of Orthodoxy and Russian Atheism" expose convincingly the falsity of religion and the anti-popular essence of the Church. One of the stands carries an exhibit of the "civil execution" of N.G. Chernyshevskiy. The great revolutionary reformer was condemned by the Senate for presenting materialistic and socialist ideas in his writings. There he stands by the pillar of shame. On his chest there is a plate bearing the inscription: "Criminal against the State". Difficult indeed was his journey to the forced

labor camp and exile, where he spent 20 years. The words of Gertsen serve as a suitable commentary to all of this: "The butcher is closer to the priest than most people think".

Visitors to the Museum spend a long time examining the exhibits which depict the pernicious activities of the religious sects.

A monk by the name of Innokentiy Balt'skiy founded a sect bearing his name. Soon thereafter, he was exposed as a fraud and a pervert. Fifty years later, some of his followers appeared in Moldavia. The Kulyak brothers reactivated the fanatical sect of the "Innokent'yevtsy". Calling themselves holy, they founded a secret church on their estate. Ivan Kulyak called on the members of the sect to commit suicide, promising the kingdom of heaven in return.

"The shorter the time a man spends on the earth", the fanatics would say, "the happier he will be in the other world". Luring the believers into a special crypt, the Kulyaks starved them, and then buried their bodies in the yard.

The stand devoted to this sect includes a photograph of the big house purchased by the "holy" brothers with money obtained from the believers. There are also pictures of the corpses found in the secret hiding places. One cannot but shudder upon viewing the picture of a child tortured to death by the "Innokent'yevtsy" in their underground crypt.

In 1957 and 1958, the sect was exposed and its leaders arrested.

The Museum was visited by Mariya Koval'chuk and Vera Rusnak, former members of this horrendous sect. "I used to collect contributions for the non-existent monastery of the "Holy Ghost". The leaders of the sect, the Kulyaks, would beat me mercilessly when the collections were small", said Mariya Koval'chuk. "I succeeded in escaping from the room of death", said Vera Rusnak. "There were four of us in the room. We were destined to die of starvation. I did not want to die. During the walks we took at night I used to pick blades of grass and eat them secretly. One day, I managed to run out into the yard and hide".

Having visited the Museum of History of Religion and Atheism, you once again come to the conclusion: religion is a lie, a fraud; it leads men astray from the path of life, and hinders them from finding happiness on earth.

Leningrad.

YOUNG ATHEISTS

-USSR-

Following is the translation of an unsigned article in Sovetskaya Latvija (Soviet Latvia), 26 April 1961, page 4.

SALDUS, 25 February. (From our correspondent). In the current school year, a young atheists' club began its work at the secondary school in our town. It includes members from the tenth and eleventh grades; its director is the school principal, Yan Yanovich Konovalov. The club meets regularly once a month to hear talks by experienced lecturers and propagandists, as well as to review and discuss lectures prepared by the club members themselves. Recently, the club was visited by a lecturer from Riga, Comrade Mezhgaylis, who spoke on the methods of atheistic propaganda. His appearance was attended by the entire active corps of the school Komsomol organization.

The club is presently preparing a thematic evening devoted to the subject "Let's discuss Religion". This presentation will first be given in the school, and then the school children will present it at the local House of Culture under the sponsorship of the "Druva" kolkhoz.

NEW TRADITIONS COME INTO EXISTENCE

-USSR-

Following is the translation of four items in Sovetskaya Latvija (Soviet Latvia), 24 February 1961, page 3.

School for Atheists

The auditorium of the Tukum Rayon house of culture is filled to overflowing. In the audience, we see old, white-haired men, young people, women workers from local enterprises, and housewives. Everyone wants to see the "miracles without magic" with his own eyes.

A lecture on this subject was prepared by teachers Yan Karklin' and Ol'ga Balode. It was supplemented by numerous experiments. On the stage, a candle was lit without a match, smoke appeared without fire, thunder pealed, etc. The lecture aroused a great deal of interest. By popular demand, it was repeated in the municipal orchards, in the village of Engura, and before a number of other organizations in the rayon. The talk had been prepared by orators attending the School of Atheists.

The School of Atheists has been in existence for only half a year. It is attended by teachers, agricultural specialists and medical workers. The number of persons attending the school this year has already doubled due to its popularity. Atheistic enthusiasts are carrying out an active anti-religious propaganda campaign among the population.

A great deal of respect among the inhabitants of the area is enjoyed, for example, by teacher Ilona Kaute, a student at the School of Atheists. Earlier, some of the children at her school did not attend classes on Saturday. They were prevented from doing so by their parents who belonged to the Adventist sect. Ilona Kaute frequently spoke to the parents, conducted lectures, and explained to them the pernicious influence of religious beliefs. Gradually, she succeeded in preventing absenteeism among her students, and was thereby able to sharply improve their performance in school.

Comrade Berzinya, a teacher at the Irlav Secondary School, and Comrade Kupcha of the Vetsmoksk Seven-Year School, as well as many others, are taking an active part in the organization of Komsomol weddings, coming of age celebrations, public christenings, and retirement parties. The School of Atheists is headed by teacher T.O. Vultsin.

A Frank Talk

"If the atheists say that the religious world view is hostile to them, does it not follow then that the believer is their enemy?" -- so ran one of the questions in a note written to the lecturer. It was signed "a believer".

I decided to clear up the question: "Perhaps, the writer of the note would explain on what such a view is based?"

"But does it not follow from the atheistic teaching?" sounded the voice of a little withered old man with a white beard.

It became clear that the writer of the note was the victim of the usual demagogery of the priests who attempt to represent believers as martyrs. They do that in order to reinforce the religious feelings of the believers. And although the lecture was devoted to another subject, I considered it necessary to answer the old man's query. After all, some of the listeners could also be thinking along the same lines.

"In the Soviet Union, no official documents require the statement of a person's religion. To us, the believer is just as much a citizen as anybody else. He is our comrade in work. If, however, we struggle against religion as an ideology which is foreign to us, we do this not by oppressive tactics, but by means of explanation and persuasion. We are convinced that the believers err in their view of nature and society. Our duty is to help them to understand this and to free themselves of their delusions.

What to do

"What am I to do if my parents are forcing me to undergo confirmation?" read the text of the next note.

I would like to suggest to the writer of the note that he explain to his parents the nature of the rite of confirmation from the scientific point of view, making it clear why it is unacceptable to our youth. Every young person must know that his parents and relatives have no right to force him to attend church, to undergo confirmation, or to

be married in church. Why? Because the Soviet Constitution protects the citizen's freedom of conscience. This is what it has to say on the subject:

"In order to assure the citizens the right of freedom of conscience, the church in the USSR is separate from the State; the schools are separate from the church. The right to participate in religious cult practices and the freedom to disseminate anti-religious propaganda is assured to all citizens".

This means that each person must decide for himself whether he believes in God or not, and whether he will attend church.

In forcing their children to undergo the rite of confirmation, or the first communion in the case of the Catholics, the parents force to children to lie. In the Lutheran church, the pastor requires affirmative answers to three questions: Does the youth desire to belong to the congregation, does he agree to fulfill all of the responsibilities with which he is charged, and does he commit himself to live his life according to Christian precepts. For a non-believer, to give affirmative answers to these questions is tantamount to a negation of his convictions and the freedom of his conscience.

"What shall I do if this was my mother's last request?" reads the note handed to the lecturer immediately thereafter.

This question is rather difficult to answer. Every human being who has even the slightest respect for his fellow man, ought not to thrust his opinions on anyone by force, especially exploiting the child's natural feelings of love toward his parents for this purpose. Apparently, such mothers resort to the last means available to them, since no other arguments will sway the child.

What is the meaning of confirmation?

To accept the first communion or to become confirmed, means, in the language of the priests, to become a full-fledged member of a religious body. In the case of the Catholics, this rite is performed with children between the ages of seven and fourteen years; the Lutherans administer it prior to the attainment of the eighteenth birthday. During the rite of confirmation (in the faith), the young men and girls must utter by part the credo, which contains a solemn promise that they believe in a single God, the creator of heaven and earth, in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and in the Holy Ghost.

A young man must publicly proclaim his renunciation of the scientific world view and to accept an idealistic-

religious outlook.

Incidentally, the priests themselves were for a long time confused by this business of God. At first they asserted that there was one God. What then was to be done with the notorious Jesus Christ? It was not until 325 that the Council of Nicea recognized his quality with God and established the two hypostases of the Godhead, the two persons of God. But in 381, this pronouncement was amended to include three hypostases in which God was manifest. Actually, the Holy Trinity is nothing more than a veiled form of polytheism. How can anyone expect a boy or girl with a modern education to believe such fairy tales!

"Eat my body and drink my blood!"

Yes, this is the call of the mythical Jesus Christ! After their confirmation, the participants receive the Eucharist; they are given a wafer, the so-called host, which is prepared from unleavened dough and is considered to be the body of the deity. The Lutherans also administer wine--the blood of Jesus. In partaking of this food and drink, the boys and girls are required to think that they are consuming the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Christ himself warns: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed". (John, 6.53-55).

Communion is not something peculiar to Christianity or something unique established by Christ. Actually, the sacrament of bread and wine was borrowed from the pagan mysteries, in particular from the cult of Mithras.

In essence, the Eucharist is an ancient survival of the blood sacrifice. History tells us that such sacrifices were offered up in Phoenicia and its colonies prior to the fall of Carthage, as well as in Greece and Rome before the epoch of the Roman Empire. Echoes of this ancient custom may also be found in the Bible:

"For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man". (Genesis. 9.5).

The Eucharist reflects the primitive idea that man may acquire the characteristics of that part of a living thing which he eats, such as the heart, blood, or meat in general. For example, it was believed that by eating the flesh of animals known for their agility, bravery, strength, or swiftness, a man could enhance these qualities within

himself.

Gradually, this rite took on a milder form, in which the gods were eaten in the form of bread and wine. But this did not change the essence of the ritual.

Communion, prayer, the kissing of the crucifix, the singing of church hymns, and many other practices tend to humiliate the dignity of man. The purpose of all of these rituals is to prove the weakness and decrepitude of man before nature.

In short, the ritual of confirmation is a mere repetition of ancient sacrificial rites. In those days, men could not trust their own powers alone.

"Love for one's neighbour" in the Christian manner

"We agree with all you have said so far!" several listeners replied at once. "But what should we do if our parents threaten to throw us out of the house unless we consent to be confirmed?"

This question serves as yet another proof of the "love of man" in its Christian interpretation.

My best expedient was to relate several analogous incidents to my listeners. Such a state of affairs confronted, for example Al'fons Videys, who was disowned by his parents because of his atheistic persuasion. But the collective at the school he attended took care of him, and now A. Videys is the first secretary of the Komsomol committee of the Gulbenskiy Rayon. His father, still a model Christian, is still telling believers to "love thine enemy" and, of course, to "love thy neighbor" in one of the churches of the Liepayskiy Rayon.

This frank talk with the young people showed that youth is seeking answers to questions as to the nature of religion, confirmation, and many other matters, in order to prove the correctness of its persuasions to parents. Unfortunately, we are still publishing much too little popular literature on these problems.

Our schools have also been called upon to devote more attention to atheistic education. Our youth must obtain in the school a clear scientific concept of the essence of religion and its reactionary role. We must all join in friendly co-operation to educate the populace in the spirit of scientific atheism in order to achieve success in this area.

G. Bushmanis.
Chairman of the History of
Religion and Atheism Department
of the Riga Historical Museum.

The Affairs and Days of the 'Holy' Fathers

Extortionist monks

The police department on the island of Sicily (Italy) has been seriously alarmed for the last two years by cases of blackmail, extortion, and, finally, a mysterious murder. An investigation led police to a monastery near the town of Caltanissetta. Here, the reverend fathers had organized a ring of bandits. It was headed by the abbot of the monastery, eighty-one-year-old Padre Don Carmelo. On the conscience of the bandits was the murder of a rich landowner by the name of Angelo Cannada, who refused to pay the bandits 20 million lira.

The scream of fashion.

The above photograph /not reproduced here due to poor quality/ was taken from an American advertising circular which praised the "excellent quality, lightness, and comfort" of a special bathing suit for nuns. This particular swimming suit design was approved at the council of the order of Benedictine nuns.

The "beggarly" order

The Jesuit Order has been called the black guard of the Vatican. Its organizational network has spread over all countries of the world. The Order now includes almost 34,000 members. The Italian bourgeois magazine "Espresso Mese" has published an article which partly lifts the veil covering the secret activities of this Order.

The order's headquarters are located in Rome. This main department is a receiving center for important and valuable information which is conveyed there through thousands of channels. The Jesuits have created a real secret information service which can be compared with the spying organizations of many countries. The extensive informational and diplomatic network serves the interests of the Pope and the papal throne. It can be compared with the political nerve center of the church which gathers data on the international situation, processes them, and puts the information at the disposal of the Pope and his diplomats.

The Jesuits are a "beggarly" order; this means that its members cannot possess any property, even their own bodies. The actual state of affairs is somewhat different, however. On the basis of privileges received from the popes,

the Jesuits own property, and conduct banking and financial operations. In the U.S., the Jesuits own significant blocks of stock in such major metal-producing companies as "Republic Steel" and "National Steel", as well as in the "Boeing", "Douglas", and "Lockheed" aircraft corporations. They own controlling interest in such petroleum concerns as "Phillips Oil Company" in Texas and "Creole Petroleum Company", which owns large concessions in Venezuela.

The German magazine "Der Spiegel" asserts that controlling interest in the Bank of America belongs to the Jesuit Order. The Order is likewise a partner in two major French automobile concerns, Peugeot and Citroen.

Another "record"

The Americans have set another record with their world's youngest priest. His name is James Reinecke, age five. His Sunday sermons have already been heard by over 100,000 believers.

For his age, the boy has an unusually articulate, expressive, and vivid manner of speaking. His parents decided to exploit his talents. They hired an artist who began to draw picture outlines for the boy's sermons. Press agents were hired and the machine went into operation. A ticket for one of James' sermons costs one dollar, of which fifty cents goes to the Catholic church. The "disinterested holy fathers" are pocketing considerable profits from their machinations with this sensational wunderkind.

Without a cassock

ALUKSNE. Several evenings ago, Darza Street began to echo shouts and unprintable profanities. A detachment of the people's militia was confronted with a middle-aged man with a beard who could barely stand on his feet. The reveller reeked of wine a mile off. The unidentified man resisted arrest furiously.

The men at the militia precinct where he was delivered finally succeeded in establishing his identity. He was Sergey Amisimovich Mikstin', a priest at the Kyurshinskaya Il'yinskaya Orthodox Church.

Mikstin' is now resting from his unrighteous ways-- he has been jailed for 15 days as a hooligan.

New Anti-Religious Literature

"Against Darkness" is the title of a new atheistic collection published by the State Political Publishing House (Gospolitizdat). It includes artistic anti-religious works by Erasmus of Rotterdam, Voltaire, Goethe, Heine, Pushkin, Saltykov-Shchedrin Gor'kiy, Upit, Mayakovskiy, and others. These writings criticize religious ideology, expose the irrational belief in a life beyond the grave and a supernatural world, and describe various holidays, rituals, and all manner of prejudices and superstitions. A special section in the book is devoted to the subject of "Religion and the Woman". Here the reader will find works by Diderot, A. Chekhov, D. Bednyy, and A. Kuprin.

All of the material in the collection is grouped in sections. This facilitates its use considerably. The book is illustrated and contains notes with brief biographical data on the authors. This useful and needed book will be read by many with great interest.

"The Jolly Bible" belongs to the pen of a well-known French journalist and atheist Gabriel Pages, who wrote under the pen-name of Leo Taxil. The book first appeared in 1897. The author prefaced his book with a satirical foreword addressed to Pope Leo XIII, in which he wrote: "I must console you. The wave of Godlessness grows from day to day. On more than one occasion have I been obliged with a sense of unutterable sorrow to note the fact that today people are usually badly informed as regards the soul-saving stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Sanson, David, Solomon, etc., etc. This is why I now take it upon myself to issue a new edition of the holy writ. It is my intention to impart to the book the most amusing possible character.

I dare not assert that my "Jolly Bible" will serve the cause of strengthening religion. On the contrary, it will explain to the reader what he should believe and why he should believe it".

With an unwavering sense of humor, L. Taxil scrutinizes the incongruities and contradictions of the bible through a detailed analysis of the biblical legends. Propagandists engaged in atheistic work will derive much valuable material from their reading of L. Taxil's interesting book.

The new edition of the "Jolly Bible" was issued by the State Political Publishing House in 1961.